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Argentina  
Disappearance

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Buenos Aires

**AJ134**

December 19, 1983

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS  
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
( ) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny  
Exemption(s):  
Declassify: ( ) In Part ( ) In Full  
( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Upgrade to  
Date

PARTICIPANTS: Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize Winner (1980) and Latin American Coordinator for the Peace & Justice Service

( Rabbi Marshall Meyer (an American who has lived in Argentina for 25 years)

Ambassador Frank Ortiz, U.S. Ambassador to Argentina

J. Anthony Allitto, Political Officer, American Embassy, Buenos Aires

DATE/PLACE : December 16, 1983, Ambassador Ortiz' Office in the U.S. Embassy

SUBJECTS : Central America; Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons

During an hour-long get-acquainted meeting that Meyer had arranged, Perez Esquivel spoke of his forthcoming trip to Central America. He noted he and his organization were quite critical of U.S. policy there. He mentioned he would be traveling to at least Nicaragua and Honduras beginning December 30. Ambassador Ortiz explained U.S. policy in the region, including Grenada. He offered to give Perez Esquivel the names of some people to see on his trip, which Perez Esquivel said he would like to have. (NOTE: After the meeting, Allitto had a driver take a USIS package of pamphlets in Spanish on U.S. policy in Central America to Perez Esquivel's office.)

Ambassador Ortiz congratulated Meyer on having been appointed by President Alfonsin to the just created 16-member National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, and asked what Meyer and Perez Esquivel thought about the new commission. Meyer deferred to Perez Esquivel, who said he believed "the Government" was going to use the Commission as a way to avoid really having to face the issue of an accounting for all the people who disappeared during the military governments.

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He noted the Commission's duties would be mainly to collect evidence to pass to the courts. He said what was really needed was a bicameral legislative investigating committee. He feared "the Government" would use the Commission as an excuse not to create the legislative committee. When Meyer noted that if the Congress decided to create such a committee, the Executive Branch could not stop it, Perez Esquivel looked unconvinced.

The meeting concluded with Perez Esquivel expressing the hope that he and Ambassador Ortiz could maintain a frank and open dialogue during the Ambassador's tour. Ambassador Ortiz replied he had the same hope and that he would always be available to Perez Esquivel.

(NOTE: Meyer had to leave the meeting early to hold a press conference at his office. As Allitto escorted him out, Meyer explained that he and Perez Esquivel differed on the question of the new Commission. Meyer did not believe its creation was an attempt by the Radical Government to avoid having to create a bicameral legislative investigating committee. However, should he later find out that Perez Esquivel had been right all along, he (Meyer) would publicly resign from the Commission in protest. He added he thought President Alfonsin was certainly smart enough to realize this and therefore he (Meyer) doubted Perez Esquivel's theory.)

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